

# THE KING MIDAS BY UPTON SINCLAIR

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**SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.**  
Helen Davis is daughter of a rural clergyman living near New York. Under the care of her New York aunt, Mrs. Roberts, Helen has been studying music in Europe. Her aunt, who meets her foster brother, Arthur, who has always loved her, and whose love is intensified by the reunion. Many years earlier, a great sorrow had left Arthur, as a boy, with Mr. Davis, telling the clergyman's daughter that she was "a good woman's son." Mr. Davis had brought Arthur up as his own child. The lad early developed talent as a poet and scholar. He writes verse while teaching school. Helen suggests that she and he collaborate in song writing.

## CHAPTER II—(Continued.)

"Yes, but, Daddy," protested Helen, "those children are dirty! Oh! I saw them as I came by."

"My love," answered the other, "they are God's children none the less; and we cannot always help such things."

"But we can, Daddy, there is plenty of water in the world."

"Yes, of course; but when the mother is ill, and the father in trouble! For poor Mr. Vail has had no end of misfortune; he has no resource but the little dairy, and three of his cows have been ill. And Helen's incorrigible night-lighted up her face again. "Oh!" she cried. "Is that it! I saw him struggling away at the pump as I came by; but I had no idea it was anything so serious!"

Mr. Davis looked grieved; Helen, when her first burst of grief had passed, noticed it had changed her mood. She put her arms around her father's neck and pressed her cheek against his.

"Daddy, dear," she said coaxingly, "haven't I done charity enough for one day? I will forfeit me to you, and then I'll be just as little fond of it as I was before. When I must let dirty children climb all over me, I can dress for the occasion."

"My dear," pleaded Mr. Davis, "goodness is placed before cleanliness."

"Yes," admitted Helen, "and of course it is right for you to inculcate the greater virtue; but I'm not a girl, and you must expect sublimity from me. You don't want to turn me into a President of sewing societies, like that dreadful Mrs. Dale!"

"Helen," protested the other, helplessly, "I wish you would not always refer to Mrs. Dale with that adjective; she is the best helper I have."

"Yes, Daddy," said Helen, with the utmost solemnity, "when I have a dreadful eagle nose like hers, perhaps I can preside over meetings, too. But I can't now."

"I do not want you to, my love; but—"

"And if I have to cling by the weaker virtue of cleanliness just for a little while, Daddy, you must not mind. I'll visit all your clean parishioners for you—parishioners like Aunt Polly!"

And before Mr. Davis could make another remark, the girl had skipped into the other room to the piano. As her father went slowly out the door the echoes of the old house were laughing with a happy melody.

## CHAPTER III.

For you alone I strive to sing,  
Oh, tell me how to woo!

When Helen was left alone she seated herself before her old music stand which had been brought down to welcome her, and proceeded to glance over and arrange the pieces she had learned and loved in her young girlhood. Most of them made her smile, and when she reflected upon how difficult she used to think them, she realized that now that it was over she was glad for the German man regime. Helen had accompanied herself an accomplished pianist when she went away, but she had met with new standards and learned to think humbly of herself in the great home of music. She possessed a genuine fondness for the art, however, and had devoted most of her three years to it. So that she came home rejoicing in the possession of a technique with any that she was likely to meet.

Helen's thoughts did not dwell upon that very long at present, however; she found herself thinking again about Arthur, and the unexpected ending of her walk with him.

"I had no idea he felt that way toward me," she mused, resting her chin in her hand; "what in the world am I going to do? Men are certainly most inconvenient creatures; I thought I was doing everything in the world to make him happy!"

Helen turned to the music once more, but the memory of the figure she had left sunken helplessly upon the piano stool stayed in her mind. "I wonder if that can be why he did not wait for me," she thought, shuddering. "If he was so wretched to see me again; what can I do?" She got up and began walking restlessly up and down the room for a few minutes.

"Perhaps I ought to go and look for him," she mused; "it was an hour or two ago that I left him there," and Helen, after thinking the matter over, had half turned to leave when she heard a step outside and saw the door open quickly. Even before she saw him she knew who it was, for only Arthur would have entered without knocking the bell. After having pictured him overcome by despair, it was rather a blow to her pride to see him, for he entered flushed and seemingly elated.

"Well, sir, you've treated me nicely!" he exclaimed, showing her vexation in spite of herself.

"You will forgive me," said Arthur, smiling.

"Don't be too sure of it," Helen said; "I looked for you everywhere, and I am quite angry."

"I was obeying your high command," the other replied, still smiling.

"My command? I told you to wait for me."

"You told me something else," laughed Arthur. "You spent all the morning instructing me for it, you know."

"Oh!" said Helen. "It was a broad and very much prolonged 'Oh,' for a sudden light was dawning upon the girl; as it came her frown gave place to a look of delight.

"You have been writing me a poem?" she cried, eagerly.

"Oh, you dear boy!" Helen laughed. "Then I do forgive you; but you ought to have told me, for I had to walk home all alone, and I've been worrying about you. I never once thought of the poem."

"The music call without warning,"

laughed Arthur, "and one has to obey them, you know."

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed the other. "And so you've been wandering around the woods all this time, making verses! And you've been waving your arms and talking to yourself, and doing all sorts of crazy things, I know!" Then as she saw Arthur flush, she went on; "I was sure of it! And you ran away so that I wouldn't see you! Oh, I wish I'd known; I'd have hunted you up and never come home until I'd found you."

As was usual with Helen, her momentary vexation had gone like April rain, and all her seriousness had vanished with it. She forgot all about the last scene in the woods, and Arthur was once more the friend of her girlhood, whom she might take by the hand when she chose, and with whom she might be as free and happy as when she was alone with the flowers and the wind. It seemed as if Arthur, too, had vented all his pent up emotion, and returned to his natural cheerful self.

"Well, then," she cried, "did you put in all the evenings I told you about?"

"I put all I could," said Arthur. "That is a great deal to ask."

"I only want it to be full of life," laughed Helen. "That's all I care

before her eyes. "Oh, I should like music for it!" she cried again.

"I don't know very much about poetry, you know," she added, laughing excitedly. "If it's about the things I like, I can't help thinking it's fine. It's just the same with music—if a man only makes it sweet and strong, so that it leaps and flies and never tires, that is all I care about; and if he just keeps his trombones till the very last he can carry me off my feet, though he makes the worst noise that ever was! It's the same as a storm, you know, Arthur; do you remember how we used to go up on our hillside when the great wind was coming, and when everything was growing still and black; and how we used to watch the big clouds and the sheets of rain, and run for home when we heard the thunder? Once, when you were away, Arthur, I didn't run, for I wanted to see what it was like; and I stayed up there and saw it all, singing the 'Ride of the Valkyries' and pretending I was one of them and could gallop with the wind. For the wind is fine, Arthur! It fills you so full of its power that you stretch out your arms to it, and it makes you sing, and it comes, and it comes again, stronger than ever, and it sweeps you on, just like a great mass of music. And then it howls through

the trees and it flies over the valleys—that was what you were thinking of, wasn't it, you Arthur?"

And Helen stopped, breathlessly, and gazed at him; her cheeks were flushed and her hands still tightly clasped.

"Yes," said Arthur, half mechanically, for he had lost himself in the girl's enthusiasm, and felt the storm of his verses unshared.

"Your poem made me think of that one time that was so glorious," Helen went on. "For the rain was almost blinding, and I was drenched, but I did not even know it. For oh, the thunder! Arthur, you're no idea what thunder is like to you near it! There fell one fearful bolt quite near me, a great white, living thing, as thick as a man's body, and the crash of it seemed to split the air. But oh, I didn't mind it a bit! 'Der Saenger triumphiert in Wettern!' I think I was a real Valkyrie that time, and I only wished that I might put it into music!"

The girl turned to the piano, and half in play struck a great rumbling chord that rolled and echoed through the room. She sounded it once more, laughing aloud with glee. Arthur had sunk down upon a chair beside her, and was bending forward, watching her with glowing interest. For again and again Helen struck the keys with all the power of her arms, until they seemed to give forth real storm and thunder; and as she went on with her reckless play the mood grew upon her, and she lost herself in the vision of the Storm King sweeping through the sky. She poured out a great stream of this wild music, singing away to herself excitedly in the meantime. And as the rush continued and the fierce music swelled louder, the phantasm took hold of the girl and carried her beyond herself. She seemed to become the very demon of the storm, unbound and reckless; she smote the keys with right royal strength, and the piano seemed a thing of life beneath her touch. The pace became faster, and the thunder rattled and crashed more wildly, and there arose in the girl's soul a power of musical utterance that she had never dreamed of in her life before. Her whole being was swept away in ecstasy; her lips were moving excitedly, and her pulses were leaping like mad. She seemed no longer to know of the young man beside her, who was bent forward with clenched fists, carried beyond himself by the sight of her exulting power.

And in the meantime Helen's music was surging on, building itself up into a great climax that swelled and soared and burst in a deafening thunder crash; and while the air was still throbbing and echoing with it, the girl joined to it her deep voice, grown suddenly conscious of new power:

See, she stamps upon the mountains,  
And he leaps the valleys high;  
Now he smites his forest harp-strings,  
And he sounds his thunder-cry—

Waken, lift up, ye creatures,  
Sing the song, each living thing!  
Join ye in the mighty passion  
Of the Symphony of Spring!

And so the young poet finished, his cheeks fairly on fire, and as he gazed down at Helen, his hand trembling so that he could hardly hold the paper. One glance told him that she was pleased, for the girl's face was flushed like his own, and her eyes were sparkling with delight. Arthur's heart gave a great throb within him.

"You like it?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Arthur, I do!" she cried. "Oh, how glorious you must have been!"

And trembling with girlish delight, she took the paper from his hand and placed it in front of her on the music rack.

"Oh, I should like to write music for it!" she exclaimed; "for those lines about the Storm-King!"

And she read them aloud, clenching her hands and shaking her head, carried away by the image they brought

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march had led her to it, and now it had taken her in its arms and swept her away, as it had swept millions by its majesty. It was the great Ninth Symphony Hymn:

Hail thee, Joy! From Heaven descending,  
Daughter from Elysium!  
Flash on hearts exulting,  
To thy sacred shrine we come.  
Thine enchantments bind together  
Those who cupids' law divides;  
All are brothers, all united,  
Where thy gentle wing abides.

And Helen sang it as one possessed by it, as one made drunk with its glory—the very Goddess of Joy that she was. For the Storm King and his legions had fled, and another vision had come into her heart, a vision that every one ought to carry with him when the great symphony is to be heard. He should see the hall in Vienna where it was given for the last time in the great master's life, and see the great master himself, the bowed and broken figure that all musicians worship, standing up to conduct it; and see him leading it through all its wild surging passion, almost too frantic to be endured; and then, when the last towering climax has passed and the music has ceased and the multitude at his back has burst forth into its thundering shout, see the one pathetic figure standing there aloft before all eyes and still blindly beating the time. There must have been tears in the eyes of every man in that place to know the reason of it—that he from whose heart all their joy had come, he who was lord and master of it, had never heard in his life and could never have to hear one sound of that music he had written, but must dwell a prisoner in darkness and solitude forever.

That was the picture before Helen's eyes; she did not think of the fearful tragedy of it—she had no feeling for tragedy, she knew no more about suffering than a child just born. But joy she knew, and joy she saw; she saw the multitude lifted up in its ecstasy, throbbing, burning and triumphant, and she sang the great chorus, one after another, and the piano beneath her fingers thundered and rang with the instrumental part. Surely in all music there is no utterance of joy so sustained and so overwhelming in its intensity as this; it is a frenzy almost more than man can stand; it is joy more than human—the joy of existence.

From kind Nature's breast receives;  
Good and evil, all are seeking;  
For the fony path she leaves.

And so the torrent of passionate exultation swept Helen onward with it until the very end, the last frantic prestissimo chorus, and then she sprang to her feet and flung up her hands with a cry. She stood thus for a moment, glowing with exultation, and then she sank down again and sat staring before her, the music still

echoing through every fiber of her soul, and the shouting multitude still surging before her.

For just how long that lasted she knew not, but only that her wild mood was gradually subsiding, and that she felt herself sinking back, as a bird sinks after its flight; then suddenly she turned. Arthur was at her side, and she gave a cry, for he had seized her hand in his, and was covering it with burning kisses.

"Arthur!" she gasped.

The young man gazed up at her, and Helen remembered the scene in the forest, and realized what she had done. She had shaken him to the depths of his being by the emotion which she had flung loose before him, and he seemed beside himself at that moment, his hair disordered and his forehead hot and flushed. He made a move as if to clasp the girl in his arms, and Helen tore her hand loose by main force and sprang back to the doorway.

"Arthur!" she cried. "What do you mean?"

He stood at a chair for support, and stood staring at her. For fully a minute they remained thus, Helen, trembling with alarm; then his head sank, and he flung himself down upon the sofa, where he lay sobbing passionately. Helen remained gazing at him with wide open and astonished eyes.

"Arthur!" she exclaimed again.

But he did not hear her, for the cruel sobbing that shook his frame, Helen, as soon as her first alarm had passed, came softly nearer, till she stood by the sofa; but still he did not heed her, and she did not dare even to put her hand upon his shoulder.

She was afraid of him, her dearest, and she knew not what to make of him.

"Arthur!" she whispered again, when he was silent for a moment. "Please speak to me, Arthur."

He gazed at her with his burning eyes, so that the girl lowered hers again. "Tell me!" he exclaimed, "what am I to do?"

"Can you not remain friends, just as we used to be?" she asked pleadingly. "Can we not talk together and help each other as before? Oh, Arthur, I thought you would come here to live all summer, and how I should like it! Why can you not? Can you not let me play for you without—without—" and Helen stopped and flushed a trifle; "I do not know quite what to make of you today," she added.

She was speaking kindly, but to the man beside her with his burning heart, her words were hard to hear; he stared at her, shuddering, and then suddenly he clenched his hands and started to his feet.

"Helen," he cried, "there is but one thing I must go."

"Go?" echoed Helen.

"If I stay here and gaze at you I shall go mad with despair," he exclaimed inconceivably. "Oh, I shall go mad! For I do love you, and you talk to me as if I were a child! Helen, I must get this out of my heart in some way. I cannot stay here."

Every word she uttered was more torment to the other, for it showed him how much his hopes were gone to wreck. He rushed across the room and opened the door; then, however, he paused, as if that had cost him all his resolution. He gazed at the girl with a look of unspeakable yearning, his face white and his limbs trembling beneath him.

"You wish me to go, Helen?" he exclaimed.

"Wish you?" exclaimed Helen, who was watching him in alarm. "Of course not; I want you to stay and see father, and—"

"And hear you tell me that you do not love me! Oh, Helen, how can you say it again? Can you not see what you have done to me?"

"Arthur!" cried the girl.

"Yes, what you have done to me! You have made me so that I dare not stay near you. You must love me, Helen, oh, some time you must!" And he turned toward her again, stretching out his arms to her. As she sprang back, frowning, he stopped and stood for an instant, half sinking; then he whirled about and darted out of the door.

Helen was scarcely able to realize at first that he was gone, but when she looked out she saw that he was already far down the street, walking swiftly. For a moment she thought of calling him; but she checked herself and closed the door quietly instead, after which she walked slowly across the room. In the center of it she stood still, gazing in front of her thoughtfully, and looking very grave indeed. "That is dreadful," she said slowly. "I had no idea of such a thing. What in the world am I to do?"

There was a tall mirror between the two windows of the room, and Helen went toward it, gazing earnestly at herself. "Is it true, then, that I am so very beautiful?" she mused. "And even Arthur must fall in love with me!"

Helen's face was still flushed with the glory of her ride with the Storm-King, she smoothed back the long strands of golden hair that had come loose, and then she looked at herself again. "It is dreadful," she said once more, half aloud, "and I don't feel so nervous in my life, and I don't know what to do; everything I did to please him seemed only to make him more miserable. I wanted him to be happy with me; I wanted him to stay with me." And she walked away frowning and seated herself at the piano and began peevishly striking at the keys. "I am going to write him and tell him that he must get over that dreadful mood," she muttered after a while, "and come back and be friends with me. I don't think I ever felt so nervous in my life, and I don't know what to do; everything I did to please him seemed only to make him more miserable. I wanted him to be happy with me; I wanted him to stay with me." And she walked away frowning and seated herself at the piano and began peevishly striking at the keys. "I am going to write him and tell him that he must get over that dreadful mood," she muttered after a while, "and come back and be friends with me. I don't think I ever felt so nervous in my life, and I don't know what to do; everything I did to please him seemed only to make him more miserable. I wanted him to be happy with me; I wanted him to stay with me." And she walked away frowning and seated herself at the piano and began peevishly striking at the keys. "I am going to write him and tell him that he must get over that dreadful mood," she muttered after a while, "and come back and be friends with me. I don't think I ever felt so nervous in my life, and I don't know what to do; everything I did to please him seemed only to make him more miserable. I wanted him to be happy with me; I wanted him to stay with me." And she walked away frowning and seated herself at the piano and began peevishly striking at the keys. "I am going to write him and tell him that he must get over that dreadful mood," she muttered after a while, "and come back and be friends with me. I don't think I ever felt so nervous in my life, and I don't know what to do; everything I did to please him seemed only to make him more miserable. I wanted him to be happy with me; I wanted him to stay with me." And she walked away frowning and seated herself at the piano and began peevishly striking at the